

Message Text

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USDA: MR. BELL

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R 172221Z APR 75

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS:EAGR, CE

SUBJECT: PL 480 RICE; DEPUTY AGRICULTURE MINISTER MEETING
AT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

REF: COLOMBO 1017

1. SUBJECT OF PL 480 RICE CAME UP AT APRIL 11 MEETING
BETWEEN CEYLONese DEPUTY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE NAVARATNE
AND SENIOR DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE OFFICIALS. AMBASSADOR
KANAKARATNE AND MELDER OF SRI LANKA EMBASSY, MESSRS.
SHEGOGUE AND MCMULLEN OF USDA AND LEADER OF STATE SAT IN.
FOLLOWING BRIEF MEETING WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF
AGRICULTURE YEUTTER, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY BELL BRIEFED
NAVARATNE ON CURRENT U.S. GRAIN SITUATION AND PL 480 OUT-
LOOK. NAVARATNE ASKED IF THERE WAS ANY POSSIBILITY OF
SRI LANKA GETTING RICE THIS YEAR UNDER PL 480. BELL
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RESPONDED THAT THERE MIGHT BE SOME POSSIBILITY IN FY 75.

HE SAID USG WAS IN PROCESS OF FINALIZING PL 480 PROGRAM AND NOTED THAT SOME RICE WAS BEING HELD IN RESERVE FOR POSSIBLE NEED IN INDOCHINA. HE NOTED THAT SOME TIME IN MAY WE SHOULD HAVE BETTER IDEA OF HOW SITUATION WAS DEVELOPING ON RICE. BELL POINTED OUT THAT WE WANTED TO ASSURE THAT IF RICE WERE AVAILABLE FOR SRI LANKA IT WOULD BE VARIETY PALATABLE TO CEYLONESE. SUGGESTED DEPUTY MINISTER

SAMPLE NON-GLUTINOUS (INDICA) VARIETIES DURING HIS TRAVELS IN SOUTHERN U.S.

2. AMBASSADOR KANAKARATNE REMARKED THAT EMBASSY WOULD BE IN TOUCH WITH DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ON THIS SUBJECT. NOTED THAT DEFERRAL OF DECISION ON SUPPLY OF PL 480 RICE UNTIL MAY WOULD CREATE PROBLEMS IN ARRANGING SHIPMENT BEFORE JUNE 30 DEADLINE FOR FY 75 PL 480. BELL RESPONDED THAT PL 480 AGREEMENT COULD MOVE QUICKLY ON U.S. SIDE SINCE IT INVOLVED ONLY AMENDMENT TO EXISTING MARCH 25 TITLE ONE AGREEMENT FOR SUPPLY OF WHEAT FLOUR.

3. USDA PLANS TO AIR POUCH APPROXIMATELY TEN SAMPLES TO EMBASSY COLOMBO ABOUT APRIL 21. SAMPLES WILL COVER SPECTRUM OF PRICE AND QUALITY IN NON-GLUTINOUS VARIETIES. CURRENT MARKET PRICES ALSO WILL BE SUPPLIED BUT THESE ARE SUBJECT TO CONSIDERABLE CHANGE. AT SAME TIME WE INTEND SHOW SAMPLES TO SRI LANKA EMBASSY HERE FOR THEIR INFORMATION. CEYLONESE EMBASSY APPRENTLY WAS NOT AWARE OF PRIME MINISTER'S SUGGESTION (COLOMBO 978) THAT RICE BE TIMED FOR ARRIVAL IN LAST QUARTER CY 75 BUT CONFIRMED OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT PROBLEM IN EARLIER ARRIVAL DERIVES FROM LIMITED STORAGE FACILITIES.

4. ACTION REQUESTED: CEYLONESE EMBASSY HAS SUGGESTED YOU HANDLE SUBMISSION OF SAMPLES THROUGH MDFA. IN DISCUSSIONS WITH CEYLONESE YOU SHOULD CONTINUE TO TAKE LINE THAT OUR INQUIRIES AND SUPPLY OF SAMPLES ARE ONLY EXPLORATORY AND US IS IN NO POSITION TO MAKE COMMITMENTS REGARDING PL 480 RICE PROGRAM IN FY 75 OR FY 76 AS INDICATED PARA ONE. IN THIS CONTEXT WE WOULD APPRECIATE READING FROM GSL ON THEIR CAPACITY TO ABSORB RICE SHIPPED BEFORE JUNE 30 AS WOULD BE REQUIRED UNDER FY 75 PROGRAM LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IF SUCH RICE SHOULD BECOME AVAILABLE. HOW MUCH COULD THEY TAKE? ALSO, IF PROSPECT OF PL 480 RICE SUPPLY TO SRI LANKA IMPROVES, WOULD GSL CONSIDER SENDING EXPERT TO US AT ITS EXPENSE TO UNDERTAKE MORE DETAILED ON-SITE SURVEY OF AVAILABLE RICE. KISSINGER

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